

FALL | WINTER 2021

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network

Love the sojourner,
therefore, for you
were sojourners...

*Loving
The
Sojourner*

UNITED STATES

MEXICO

Stories From the Border

God's Faithfulness Among Sojourners

Nearly everyone in the United States has an impression or opinion of the U.S./Mexico border. Maybe it comes from news bites or glimpses of a photo on Instagram. But few understand how complex and complicated living and ministering in this place can be.

A couple of years ago we met a young man who fled Cuba and started a long journey through Central America before landing in our neighborhood on the border. He came to Mexico seeking asylum in the United States, but that claim has been denied. Little by little we have gotten to know him; little by little he has learned to trust us. He gifted one of our teammates with a beautiful pair of leather boots and told him that he was his first true friend in his lifetime.

That young man now works with us and around the neighborhood. Though he has no family tradition of attending church, he is coming to worship services and just started attending the weekly adult Bible study at our community center.

Throughout Scripture, we see a pattern of people residing in communities and places, whether temporarily or for the long-term, that are not originally their own. Perhaps that is why, over and over, God's people are commanded to give special care and concern to the sojourner.

PROVIDENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE THE SOJOURNER

The ministry at Isaiah 55 in Reynosa, Mexico, where we serve in partnership with MTW among the deaf and marginalized, focuses on development rather than relief. As such, we typically don't have an ongoing ministry with migrants. But the reality of living just a five-minute walk from the border means that we regularly meet and

have opportunity to serve those who hope they are only passing through.

In the spring of 2021, a growing camp of several thousand migrants formed in a plaza in downtown Reynosa, all waiting for the opportunity to claim asylum in the United States. Hundreds of stubby tents filled the once spacious plaza, with hardly any room to walk in between. Families lined up to receive donations of food and clothing—everything they have coming from the mercy of others. People in this camp are incredibly vulnerable, literally living outdoors in the middle of town, exposed to the hot sun and the torrential rain of the summer. They are also frequent victims of exploitation.

Some of our staff and summer interns have volunteered at the camp, helping a local ministry to migrants. We have met people who have journeyed thousands of miles with long weeks of travel. We have met people who were victims of crime before they left their homes and then have been victims of crime along the way. Despite the hardship and trauma each of these families have experienced, we find that kids remain kids, excited about singing and coloring and playing, wiggling while listening to the Bible stories, but quick to repeat back, "God is faithful!"

BEING FAITHFUL IN THE TRANSITION

The transitory nature of border cities provides another challenging dynamic in ministry. We had been discipling a couple with a long history of addiction and complicated family relationships. Over the course of a year, we walked a tumultuous path with them, marked by both trial and celebration. We were beside them in the ugliest throes of addiction. We waited alongside the husband as the wife went missing for nearly a week, a kidnapping victim. But we also celebrated birthdays and new jobs and consecutive days of sobriety. We ate together and played dominoes and Uno together. And through it all, we had opportunity to share the gospel by continually speaking the truth—the promise and the hope of Scripture and faith in Christ.

After a year of attending Bible study and discipleship activities, this couple moved back to their hometown farther south in Mexico. It is not uncommon for people, whether migrant or workers or families, to be at the border for a time and then leave. And though immediately a move feels more like loss than celebration, this reality reinforces the idea that we never really

know how much time we have together with anyone. We know that we must be intentional and purposeful with the time we do have.

Ecclesiastes 1:9 tells us, "There is nothing new under the sun." As early as Genesis, we learn that God's people will be without a home and as such, we are taught over and



Migrants gather at the border wall.

And through it all, we had opportunity to share the gospel by continually speaking the truth—the promise and the hope of Scripture and faith in Christ.

over, "You shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt" (Ex. 22:21, ESV). Therefore, our response in ministry, and really that of all believers, remains nothing different than that which Micah demands, "To do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with our God" (Micah 6:8, NIV). [n](#)

MTW is prayerfully looking to plant 15 churches in Mexico by 2030. Pray with us! mtw.org/join

Join THE story

More Than Drops in the Bucket

How a little church in Greece is taking on the refugee crisis with the love of Christ

Back in his home country of Iran, Amir*—a nominal Muslim—had been a computer science professor. After being thrown in jail twice for his political views, his family told him: “You’ve got to leave the country. If you go to jail again, we’ll never see you again.”

BY: ANDREW SHAUGHNESSY



A million and a half refugees are estimated to have passed through Greece.

Amir left without telling his family—doing so would have put them in danger.

Fatima* became a believer in Iran, fleeing the country after her brother and father tried to kill her. Her journey to Greece was fraught with danger and tragedy, but along the way she met Amir. They married, moved to Athens, and connected with the Glyfada church where MTW missionaries serve.

Amir and Fatima are just two of the more than 82.4 million people—one out of every 95 people in the world—forcibly displaced from their homes.** These men, women, and children have fled things like war, persecution, and famine, seeking safety and a better life elsewhere. For many, particularly those from the Middle East or Central Asia, their destination was Europe—and the route of their modern-day exodus took them straight through Greece.

“Probably a million and a half refugees have passed through Greece to other places,” said MTW missionary David Pervis. “Today there are about 50,000 in this country.”

Partnering with the Greek Evangelical Church, MTW missionaries David and Erin Pervis work with a congregation of around 50 people in Glyfada, a city seven miles south of the Athens’ center. Back in 2015, the Greek government set up a refugee camp in an old airport on the edge of Glyfada. The refugees’ needs were immense, and before long the church decided they had to do something to help.

A CHURCH OF 50 HAS SHELTERED 22 FAMILIES

Led by Greek pastor George Toliias and MTW missionaries Kay and Phillip Luther, the congregation began distributing clothing in the refugee camp—ministering to immediate needs in whatever little ways they could. When the government closed the camp in June 2017, George and the Luthers developed a plan to house refugees who had no place to live with the goal of helping them integrate into Greek society, since the borders to the rest of Europe had been closed.

“The denomination owned a three-story building with an apartment on each floor,” David said. “They allowed the church to rent two of these floors, and it was arranged such that families could each take a bedroom—each with its own bath—and sharing two kitchens, a living room, and a classroom.”



David & Erin Pervis, MTW missionaries serving in Greece

They call it Voula House. Here, as part of the church’s At Home Project, a total of 22 refugee families from Iran, Afghanistan, Syria, and elsewhere have lived side by side in the shared space. Some have been believers, some Muslims, some Yazidi. Without citizenship, and still learning Greek, these refugees struggle to find work in Athens. Though cash is tight for many Greeks as well, the Glyfada church allows these families to stay rent-free, while the church pays for utilities and occasionally provides money for food—giving them shelter and helping them survive as they get on their feet and build new lives in Europe.

“We have a system where these families basically sign a contract with the church—the rules for the house,” Erin explained. “They have to work on their [asylum] paperwork, try to find a job, study Greek and English, and try to get their kids in school. They have all these hoops that they need to jump through, but then they can stay at Voula House for a maximum of two years.”

The goal is for families to transition to living on their own. Meanwhile the Glyfada church does everything they can to help them along the way.

“At this point, there’s a waiting list to get into the Voula House,” said Erin. “It’s kind of a drop in the bucket. I wish we had 1,000 Voula Houses, because there are still so many refugees who don’t have a safe place to live—not just in Athens, but all over the country.” >>

>> “Just” a drop in the bucket or not, if the church had not opened their hearts and doors to these families, they would all be in much more dire straits. David and Erin tell stories of refugee families they have known: the Kurdish family with three kids, living in somebody’s garden in the center of Athens; the mother with a brand-new baby, squatting in an abandoned school; a man whose only jacket was stolen while he was off washing his pot.



Glyfada church planter, Pastor George Toliadis, with his wife, Fedra, and children

A HEART FOR MUSLIMS

Erin has had a heart for Muslims since long before she and David moved to Greece. Fluent in Arabic, she spent most of her 20s and 30s living and ministering all over the Middle East. After she and David were married, the pair served on MTW church-planting teams in Bulgaria and Ukraine for nearly 20 years. They watched from afar as the Middle East collapsed into chaos in the wake of the Arab Spring; as millions fled across the Mediterranean on leaky boats, searching for peace and hope.

“I still have a real love for Muslims, and Syrians in particular,” Erin said. “These folks have been through and seen unspeakable things, and some of them left because they became believers in their own country and were persecuted. Many others, not just here in Greece, but everywhere in Europe—they’re really open. Now they have an opportunity to hear the gospel clearly for maybe the first time, and that’s a great thing.”

After the Pervises’ kids graduated from high school in Ukraine, they saw their chance—their call—and they took it. In 2018, they moved to Greece to serve alongside the local church, to

share the gospel and minister to their refugee neighbors, and to make a dent for the kingdom in a hurting world.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Pervises would visit the Voula House, teaching English, spending time with the families, and listening to their stories. They celebrated birthdays, danced in Iranian dance parties, and shared meals together.

“Many of them would tell us, ‘We haven’t laughed in years,’” said Erin. “They would cook for us and say, ‘My mom used to make this.’ For them, it’s an opportunity to really be seen as humans.”

“They have been evangelism machines among Farsi speakers in their refugee housing. ... Over 100 people have come to Christ.”

“YOUR GOD IS BIG”

Amir and Fatima were the first to move into the Voula House. Amir watched his Christian wife and the local Christians who had helped them in their time of need.

“Your God is big,” he told her.

After joining a Bible study with the Luthers and having dozens of conversations over tea, Amir began to soak in gospel truth. After three months, he became a Christian too. The couple became leaders at Voula House, started helping with the church, and got baptized. In the years since, they were able to move on to Germany, where Amir was more likely to find decent computer science work.

“They had to basically start over in the refugee system in Germany,” Erin said. “But in the meantime, they have been evangelism machines among Farsi speakers in their refugee housing.”

“Over 100 people have come to Christ,” David added.

“That’s God doing all that,” Erin said. “God brought them on that journey, awful as it was. They found each other. And now

it’s just amazing. You never know what God will do with all these little drops in the bucket.”

Remarkable as it is, that’s just one story of many.

There’s the family of believers—a husband, wife, and elementary school-aged son—who struggled to find work in Athens, and eventually left on foot to sneak into Norway where they will have a chance to share their faith with fellow Iranians.

There’s Abbas,* a young man who had been in the Syrian army, arrested on suspicion of disloyalty to the regime, and tortured in prison for a year. When he was released, he found that his parents had been killed in a bombing. Fearing for his safety, he walked to Turkey and from there made his way to Athens. But on the way, he had a dream. In his dream, his Muslim mother hung a cross around his neck. Dreams are seen as very significant in Islam, and when he arrived in Athens he went straight to a refugee center where a woman from the Glyfada church was working. He told her: “I want to become a Christian.” And so he did.

There’s the Afghan man thrown into prison in Greece for not having the right papers. There, someone gave him a Bible in his own language, and he read the whole thing.

There’s the Iranian couple who, after moving into Voula House, came to faith through conversations with Pastor Toliadis. They were baptized this spring.

Story after story after story of brokenness and suffering, healing and redemption; of people fleeing the horrors of war and finding the hope of Christ in a little church in Athens.

“For 30 or 40 years there has been an emphasis on praying for the 10/40 window, and this is part of the answer,” David said. “These are not just ‘drops in the bucket,’ they are image bearers, each one precious to the Lord. It’s just a wonderful privilege to get to work with and develop a deeper relationship with them.”

Nearly snuffed out, these image bearers were given a spark of hope through the power of the gospel and the witness of His Church. And now these little sparks—lit in the embers of Glyfada—are spreading from Greece across Europe, primed to set Europe ablaze with the hope of Christ. [i](#)

*Names changed for security.

**Source: United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR.org)

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Debbie Pixley at the summit of Mount Fuji in Japan.

“Coincidence” Becomes Calling

Debbie Pixley’s Journey From Automotive Engineer to MTW Missionary

Debbie Pixley never planned to become an MTW missionary to Japan. Originally, she wasn't particularly interested in Japan as a country. Growing up in Detroit in the 1980s and during her 19 years working at Japanese car companies, she just wanted to have a successful career as an automotive engineer. But God had other plans, and He lined up one “coincidence” after another to pave her path to ministry.

Coincidence #1: While Debbie was studying mechanical engineering in college, her university required her to take a humanities elective. The only class that fit her busy schedule was “Japanese History and Culture,” a reluctantly-pursued foreshadowing of what was to come.

Coincidence #2: When Debbie graduated in 2001, she hoped to land a job with an American company. Instead, after dozens of dead-end interviews, she was hired by a major Japanese car manufacturing company.

Coincidence #3: More than 10 years ago, Debbie decided to learn Japanese—not to become a missionary, but to grow and thrive in her burgeoning international career.

“I had a lot of Japanese bosses and coworkers and spent a lot of time on business trips in Japan,” Debbie explained. “I started learning a little bit of Japanese just to get by.”

But enough Japanese “to get by” wasn’t enough for someone with Debbie’s ambition and drive. When she was assigned to a job with less travel and overtime, Debbie decided to get a master’s degree. She had always planned to get an MBA at some point, but when the time came, she discovered a program offering a Master of Engineering degree in technical Japanese. It seemed like the perfect fit: a chance to hone her Japanese skills while also getting an advanced engineering degree.

For the next three years, Debbie learned how to translate technical language from Japanese into English. Even though vocabulary about semi-conductors and physics doesn’t translate directly to ministry conversation topics, that training provided a solid foundation of Japanese, ultimately equipping her with the skills to communicate fluently in relational ministry and translate for the local church in Tokyo.

A GRADUAL CALLING

Her first turning point came in 2011, when a massive earthquake and tsunami barreled into Japan, wreaking vast amounts of damage and killing around 20,000 people.

“I really felt that God was saying that I should go to help with cleanup, disaster relief, handing out food, whatever they needed,” Debbie said.

Two years earlier, Debbie had visited an MTW church plant in Chiba, establishing an initial connection and meeting her first MTW missionaries. When, in 2011, she heard that a new MTW church plant in Tokyo was sending people to take supplies and serve in the disaster area, and that they desperately needed drivers who could speak Japanese, she immediately volunteered. She stayed for three weeks, driving volunteers and serving however she could. There, too, she met MTW missionaries Roger and Abi Lowther.

“I expected it to be just a short-term thing,” Debbie said. “But during that trip there were some beginning thoughts of: ‘Where is God leading me in this?’”

In 2013, Debbie’s employer transferred her to Yokohama, Japan, and her ministry calling began to unfold. Already connected with the Lowthers and other MTW missionaries, Debbie began attending Grace City Church in Tokyo.

Debbie with her Japanese tutor, Ayaka Ono



“It’s a Presbyterian church, its bilingual, and they have a lot of passion for faith and work in business,” she explained. “It matched on every level for me.”

She spent the next four years working in Japan. On weekdays, she managed the automotive company’s quality strategy department. But on weekends, Debbie’s life was about the church. Every Friday night, she would leave work and head into Tokyo for her bilingual small group, a diverse gathering of Japanese and expat professionals from across the globe. At first, she simply attended—studying God’s Word with her community. Over time, she moved co-leading the group with several others.

At Grace City, Debbie put her language skills to work, translating PowerPoints, sermons, prayers, and announcements from Japanese into English. Every so often, she and others from the church would take trips up north to continue relief efforts—rebuilding and forging gospel connections.

“Through those four years, my passion for the Japanese people, and for supporting and working with the church, really grew,” said Debbie. “I didn’t want to leave. I would have loved to stay in Japan, but it just wasn’t possible. ... While I was there some things changed with the company and they asked me to move to Nashville.”

Even then, Debbie’s plan was to continue moving up the ladder with her career. But she couldn’t shake Japan—its need for Christ, the way that God had perfectly molded her to go. >> 13

BY: ANDREW SHAUGHNESSY

COMING HOME

Malawian Missionaries Cast a New Mold for MTW's Work in Africa



BY: HANNAH J. PHILLIPS

Before Confex and Mwai Makhalira moved to Grand Rapids, Michigan, they already knew they wanted to return home to Malawi. While they were sharing their desire to see the true gospel preached in their home country, a friend mentioned Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary and gave them two warnings about Michigan: First, it takes over 24 hours to get there from Malawi; and second, it's cold—very cold.

They took the plunge. “The education was worth it,” says Confex, who felt called to ministry after coming back to faith in high school. Because his father passed away when Confex was very young, he grew up with his grandfather, who taught him the Bible throughout his childhood.

“He was a very godly man,” Confex recalled. “When I grew up a little bit, he bought the Westminster Shorter Confession and encouraged me to memorize it, so I grew up knowing the Word of God and appreciating the Confession as a summary of faith.”

After turning away from the Lord during high school, Confex vividly remembers hearing the gospel again at a church youth camp. The sermon was on Acts 2, where the Holy Spirit enables the disciples to preach the gospel in over a dozen languages. The message not only convicted Confex, but gave him an immediate desire to see the gospel preached faithfully in Malawi. Finishing high school, he attended African Bible College, where he met his wife, Mwai, and started pursuing ministry as a Bible teacher.

“During that time, the Lord started placing on my heart to do more than teach the Bible,” he said. “My heart was burdened by the Church in Malawi and I wanted to serve as a pastor, so the Lord had me pray about pastoral ministry and He opened the door.”

A VISION SHARED

Confex received a scholarship to Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary and graduated in 2016. He first learned about Mission to the World after sharing his desire to return to Malawi with a professor who knew about MTW's passion for church planting. Around the same time,



Confex and Mwai Makhalira with their two daughters

The message not only convicted Confex, but gave him an immediate desire to see the gospel preached faithfully in Malawi.

MTW had targeted Malawi as a strategic place to partner with national churches in the ministry of discipleship, mentoring, and ultimately church planting.

“Confex has a vision that we obviously share in,” said Tim Galage, MTW's regional director for Southern Africa. “He would like to see a Reformed Presbyterian denomination built on the continent and, through his church-planting internship, hopes to see 10 churches planted in the next 10 years. He is uniquely gifted and we are so excited to come alongside him; we're trying to keep up with him.” >>

>> MTW's international director for sub-Saharan Africa and native Zimbabwean, Victor Nakah, agrees. "The reason there is a lot of excitement about Confex is because there are fewer and fewer missionaries coming to Africa," Victor said. "Part of the solution is to increase the number of Confexes coming back home."

Tim and Victor attribute the decline in missionaries coming to Africa in recent years largely to the misinterpretation of



Confex baptizes the child of a family in his church.

the growth of the African Church, currently one of the fastest growing hubs for Christianity in the world.

"The numbers are ridiculous," Victor said, quoting something like 3,000 churches planted every day. "It's very easy for the American Church to assume we don't need missionaries anymore. But there is also a confusion that emanates from the African Church because they don't want just any missionary right now. The days are gone when you just show up and find something to do."

A SUSTAINABLE STRATEGY

Instead, the recent growth means MTW needs to be strategic about who comes to Africa. Both Victor and Tim want to see the African Church become a sending Church, coming alongside national partners and churches to play a strategic role in discipleship and helping them allocate resources as they grow. As a result, they see Confex and Mwai's ministry as an opportunity to introduce MTW's network to Malawi in the most sustainable way possible.

"We are starting there the way we should have started all along," said Victor. "Not to pioneer but to support the pioneers who have been there all along."

This is part of why the Makhairas had considerable leeway in deciding where to establish their ministry upon returning to Malawi. Rather than impose an internal agenda, MTW wanted the couple to educate themselves on what was already happening in Malawi and to leverage their existing network.

They chose the city of Blantyre, in part for its economic influence on the rest of the country, and also for its multitude of academic institutions.

"The reason there is a lot of excitement about Confex is because there are fewer and fewer missionaries coming to Africa. ... Part of the solution is to increase the number of Confexes coming back home."

"We wanted to start our work here because of the large population of students," said Confex. "We have been looking to the future, and if we can get hold of these young men and women and help them be grounded in God's Word, they can have an impact in the coming years."

For Confex, getting to know the young men in the student ministry has been one of the great joys of the work thus far. He shares the story of one student, Auswell, whom he met through his campus evangelism. A few months after Confex shared the gospel with him, Auswell texted asking for prayer. They started meeting regularly and Confex began discipling him. "It has been a joy seeing him come to a better understanding of who Christ is," Confex said.

Of course, the past year also brought pandemic-induced challenges to the student ministry, and to the ministry in general. Confex and Mwai had only arrived in Blantyre about six months before the pandemic began, and it seemed at first that lockdowns and restrictions would halt the progress they had made. Moving Bible studies to Zoom was difficult because the internet is expensive in Malawi. But God was not deterred: The work not only continued but multiplied as new opportunities to minister to the community arose because of the pandemic.

"We were discouraged at first because we were thinking it was back to square one," said Confex. "The Lord has been faithful even in the midst of that, allowing us to use funds from MTW to help meet the needs of people with food items and groceries."

Included in the packages were gospel tracts, which attracted more people to their Bible study. When they resumed meeting in person in September, they had a good turnout. Deciding to start public worship on November 1, they welcomed about 60 people to a rented office space in downtown Blantyre for their first service. After a brief return to lockdowns in March, they were able to resume in-person worship and even move forward with their first membership class in June.

"Most people in Malawi hear the prosperity gospel: Give to the Lord and the Lord will give to you," Confex said. "Through ministry and acts of kindness, COVID allowed us to show people the love of Christ in action and teach them the true gospel."

He hopes that work will only continue as they add new members to their church community, especially through family ministry. Discipleship starts in the home, he says, so teaching fathers to lead their families and ground them in God's Word will have a ripple effect in the community. Likewise, discipling students at local universities will in turn train them to shine the love of Christ wherever they go after college.

Serving with MTW has provided not only guidance to carry out these visions, but also support to keep planning and praying for the future. "We have an MTW couple who checks on us regularly," said Mwai. "They ask us how we are doing individually and as a couple, and if we are resting, which is an encouragement."

"We have these brothers praying for us," Confex added. "We are not on our own laboring here." 

Coincidence [CONTINUED]

>> "On my street in Nashville there are six churches of varying denominations—thousands of people who worship within a few minutes of my house," said Debbie. "In Japan there's almost no one. Every Christian there plays a vital role. I became really convicted that I'm just a drop in the ocean in Nashville. And yet, God has given me the language ability, the connection with the Japanese people, the heart for missions in Japan. Why would I throw all that away in Nashville if I can go back?"

In October 2018, Debbie was visiting Grace City Church while on a business trip to Tokyo when she had lunch with the Lowthers, along with Pastor Fukuda from Grace City Church. The three were right at the end of a decade-long effort to plant 10 churches in Japan. Debbie could see their excitement at the work that God was doing: Churches were being planted, people were baptized, and the number of Japanese Christians was growing. But she could also see that they needed more support.

"The next week, I had a meeting with my mentor at my company who is also a Christian," Debbie said. "We had been talking through these things for a while, but that was the point where I told him: 'God is telling me that this is something I need to do. He's calling me to long-term missions.'"

It took another year of conversations with Roger, Abi, and her mentor to finally make the mental shift. But in 2019, Debbie decided to become a full-time MTW missionary in Japan.

NO COINCIDENCES

Though the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted and slowed her transition, Debbie is nearing the end of raising support to serve in Japan. When she returns, Debbie will put her organizational management skills to work for the local church and the MTW Community Arts Team in Tokyo: running logistics for large meetings and outreach/ministry events like concert series, art exhibits, and seminars. With nearly 20 years of professional experience working in Japan, and her pre-existing language skills, Debbie will be able to hit the ground running.

"Looking back, God used all those things," Debbie said. "Sometimes missionaries have a heart for a certain country from the beginning; maybe they'll apply to work at a certain company because it's Japanese. For me it wasn't like that. God had to intervene and open that door for me."

No coincidences, just a calling etched out by providence. Over the years, God has uniquely guided Debbie's path and crafted her character and gifts for a particular kingdom purpose. It's what He does for all of us, if we just take the time to listen. 

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Image taken during a short term mission trip to Peru.
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FROM THE COORDINATOR

We Are Not in Control

With the rapid retaking of Afghanistan by the Taliban and a worldwide pandemic, one thing we have learned these past couple of years is that we are not in control. For many, this is distressing, for some it is life or death.

Who likes having other people or circumstances dictate what we can or cannot do? And yet, it is this realization that helps us draw closer to God.

Consider Psalm 2. The simple message of Psalm 2 is that the Lord reigns through His Messiah Son. The first implication is that because the Lord reigns, we do not. The psalm begins, *“Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?” It is because they do not like being ruled by someone or something else. How about us?*

The second implication is that because the Lord reigns, we should fear Him. The psalm tells rulers to be wise, to serve the Lord, and to kiss the Son lest He be angry (2:10–12). Fearing the Lord does two things: (1) It rightly orients us to respect God, and (2) it frees us from fearing other things—competing idols.

Fearing the Lord enables us to enter into the uncertainty of life with courage knowing that He rules over sickness, our nation,

and the world. The rod of iron that will break rebellious nations becomes the rod and staff that comfort us when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death. This leads us to a third implication.

The psalm ends with the statement, “Blessed are all who take refuge in him!” Because the Lord reigns, all who take refuge in Him are blessed. What does it mean to take refuge in the Son? The Heidelberg Catechism gets at this beautifully: “What is your only comfort in life and death? That I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from all the power of the devil. He also preserves me in such a way that without the will of my heavenly Father not a hair can fall from my head; indeed, all things must work together for my salvation. Therefore, by his Holy Spirit he also assures me of eternal life and makes me heartily willing and ready from now on to live for him.”*

We are not in control, but we have a Savior who is. He not only loves us, but He loves the world. Are you willing and ready from to live for Him? [n](#)

* *Heidelberg Catechism question and answer #1*



Dr. Lloyd Kim

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